Freedom for Political Prisoners!

Newsletter dedicated to Belarusian political prisoners (Palitviazni.info)

Frantskievich has been released free



"They woke me up at 5 a.m. instead of usual 6 a.m.. They took care of all documents in half an hour and at 5:30 a.m. they released me outside the prison gate. They did it so early that I didn't manage to say goodbye to my friends from the colony", said Aliaksandr Frantskievich.

The political prisoner said, that he was under constant pressure in prison, but the pressure was put on normal prisoners as well:

"If you are strong you may withstand it regardless of the reason of imprisonment".

Last five months **Aliaksandr Frantskievich** spent in seclusion cell. He knows about the situation in the country form letters. Current events from Belarus he called "political terror".

"My views hasn't changed, unless we find their strengthening as a change", claimed the political prisoner.

Before he was put in a seclusion cell, the prisoner saw Eduard Lobau few times, who told him that he started a welding course.

The prisoner admitted that food in the penal colony is awful.

"You can only survive thanks to things sent by your family. There was only carrot from the vegetables here in the colony".

Aliaksandr's plan include coming back to a company, where he had been working before the arrest. Aliaksandr is a computer programmer.

"I haven't touched a computer for three years. Having seen how other prisoners use it I was itching to use it".

Currently Aliaksandr plans to go to Novopolack where he has preventive supervision, however, he will try to move to Minsk to find a job in an IT company.

Aliaksandr Frantskievich thanked everybody for support and letters, that he was constantly receiving. When going out he was carrying a huge bag of letters.

Three years ago, in September 2010, he was arrested in connection with the so called anarchist case. On 24th May, 2011, Zavodskoi Rayon Court sentenced Aliaksandr Frantskievich for three years of imprisonment.

svaboda.org

Haidukou transferred to Mahilou jail

A political prisoner has been transferred from a detention facility in Vitebsk to correctional colony No. 19 in Mahilou.

Andrei Haidukou's relatives learnt it only when they came to give him a parcel, Radio Racyja reports.

"Our relatives in Vitebsk wanted to give him a parcel, but they were told that he was in Mahilou. Neither his parents nor the lawyer were informed about it. We thought he would stay in Vitebsk longer, but he was suddenly transferred to Mahilou," **Maria Haidukova**, the political prisoner's sister, said.

On July 1, 2013, Andrei Haidukou was found guilty of violating part 1 of article 14 and article 356-1 of the Criminal Code of Belarus (attempts to establish contacts with the special services, security bodies or intelligence agencies of a foreign state). He was sentenced to 1.5 years in prison. The verdict was ruled by the Vitebsk regional court.

The trial was held behind closed doors. The 23-year-old worker of Navapolatsk-based plant Naftan was initially charged with attempting a crime (part 1 of article 14) and treason (part 1 of article 356).

Haidukou's family and friends do not believe he was involved in spying. They explain pressure from the KGB by Haidukou's pro-opposition views and his plans to open an international NGO "Union of Young Intellectuals" in Navapolatsk.

racyja.com

Political prisoner Autukhovich cuts abdomen in prison



Mikalai Autukhovich had to resort to extreme measures protesting against illegal sanctions.

The businessman from Vaukavysk, who serves his term in prison No. 1 in Hrodna, injured himself – he cut his abdomen with a razor.

The information was received by the human rights organisation Platform Innovation .

Mikalai Autukhovich has been receiving unfair sanctions for the last two years. New sanctions are imposed when the old ones expire. On September 4, 2013, the political had a month until the expiry of all previous sanctions when he was accused of committing a new violation. The new disciplinary sanction deprived him of an opportunity to receive parcels and meet with his relatives that is allowed to other inmates.

Mikalai Autukhovich was punished allegedly for failure to be in bed after the bedtime signal on August 26, 2013.

The political prisoner's response to the new sanction can be explained by his successful attempts to avoid any violations not to give grounds to prison officers to punish him, the source says.

"As a military officer, he doesn't find it difficult to wake up early and go to bed on time. He got used to it. He got used not to talk to anyone for six months, just a couple of common phrases in order not to give grounds for provocations," the source says.

The prison authorities try to stick the label of a "persistent violator of prison rules" to Mikalai Autukhovich. This status allows charging him with violating article 411 of the Criminal Code (failure to obey orders from prison staff) and adding another prison term or placinge him under police supervision after the release.

"If the prison authorities have these aims, Mikalai Autukhovich can remain behind bars for a long time. He has been in prison longer than other political prisoners. He understands perfectly that he shouldn't give a ground for sanctions. He tries to avoid it. The information we received shows that pressure on him has increased," Platform Innovation thinks.

Human rights activists sent requests to Hrodna prison No. 1 and the Corrections Department.

Mikalai Autukhovich, a veteran of the Soviet War in Afghanistan, was sentenced to 5 years in a maximum security prison in May 2010 for possession of five cartridges for a hunting rifle.

Ihar Alinevich marks 30th birthday

A political prisoner celebrates his birthday behind bars.

Ihar Alinevich turns 30 today. He is in correctional colony No. 10 in Navapolatsk.

On May 27, 2011, the Zavadski district court found Ihar Alinevich guilty of hooliganism (part 2 of article 339) and intentional destroying or damaging property (parts 2 and 3 of article 218). He was sentenced to 8 years in a medium security correctional colony.

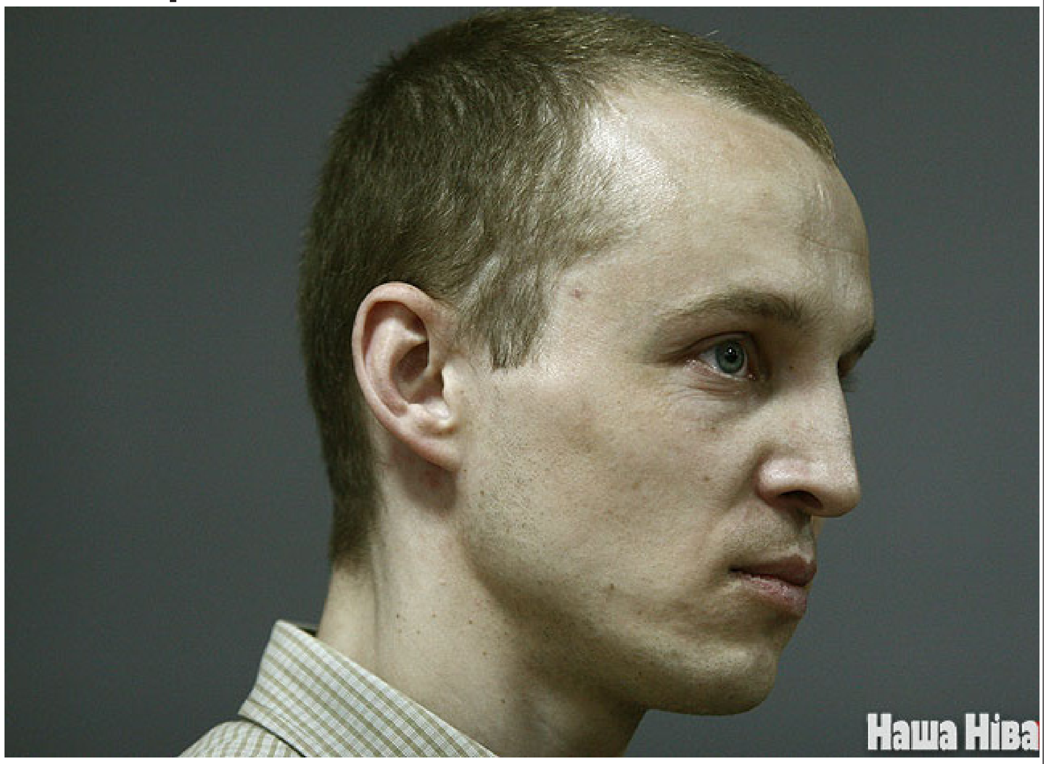
The court trial against Belarusian anarchists began on May 18, 2011. They were charged with carrying out attacks on buildings and arsons attacks, holding an unsanctioned anti-military procession near the Ministry of Defence in 2009, throwing Molotov cocktails at the Russian embassy in Minsk and the detention centre in Akrestsin Street in 2010. They were also charged with attacking other buildings – throwing flares at Shangri La casino and the Belarusian Federation of Trade Union in Minsk, attempts to set on fire offices of Belarusbank and Bank Moscow-Minsk and a police station in Salihorsk.

In early 2013, Ihar Allinevich's book "Going to Magadan" was published on the basis of his diary he kept in the KGB jail.

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Dzmitri Dashkievich: I do not provoke any situation, nor am i provoked



The leader of the Young Front, Dzmitri Dashkievich was released from prison on August 28. Political prisoner has announced his intention to leave the Young Front. Is he still planning to enter politics, or engage in social activities? Such a question Palitviazni.info asked to Dzmitri himself.

Dzmitri Dashkievich: *Of course I intend to continue my socio-political activities. As for the form, currently I cannot say much about it.*

- Even before the release from prison you have received preventive supervision. To what extent these limitations bother you?

Dzmitri Dashkievich: It looks like this: I'm not allowed to leave the district of Minsk, every day from eight in the evening until six in the morning I have to be at home. Generally speaking, I am not being provoked. I was informed that police officers can visit me up to three times a night. For now, it is quiet. I do not provoke the situation, nor am I provoked.

- Dzmitri, what do you think about the changes in the socio-political situation in the country? Do you see any major changes?

Dzmitri Dashkievich: We can see that the Belarusian regime loses its grip on reality. Until 2010 Lukashenka sought to build some trust in voters, today after all the economic disaster he has began to give up appealing to the public opinion. He focused mainly on the economic mafia within his environment, oligarchs supporting regime and apparatus of coercion. He ceased to be interested in what people think, and is capable of any initiative. He may commit any deed, in the style of mass confiscations of livestock, taking a hundred dollars for each trip out of the country, as desired. At the end, he has no interest in public opinion. And speaking of people's attitudes, about their desire to change, then nothing has changed dramatically. The level of apathy is the same, although there is a possibility that I'm wrong.

- Probably from 2010 the change includes the dissemination of information about the situation in prisons, detention centers, in the situation of political prisoners, and others. How often do you meet with the described phenomena?

Dmitry Dashkevich: *I met with this, and I think that it is no new information that people are being beaten there. So it was five and ten years ago. When people are made to eat in prison with Toothbrush container, I think it's a form of torture and harassment. Despite the fact that the Department of Penitentiary says all this is done within the law. The attitude towards people in prisons is of interest only to prisoners themselves or their families. The other exhibit in this area indifference.*

- Do you consider this state of affairs to be acceptable? On the one hand, it is clear that corrupt officials do not raise sympathy. On the other hand, a man goes to prison just for having a different political views from the leadership of the state.

Dzmitri Dashkievich: *I believe the topic to be fairly complex. Let's honestly admit: who's imprisoned for whose sake? I was imprisoned for my views. With me, there are dozens, hundreds of people. These people have supported me when I was free as well when I was behind bars. I do not want to dramatize, as some people do, claiming that I was imprisoned for the sake of nation, for the people who betray me. This is a schizophrenic approach – here I am doing something for the nation, and the nation betrays me. If the society does not stand for a man, does not follow him, it means that he does not realize the interests of the public. You have to look reality straight in the eye.*

The third birthday of a political prisoner behind bars. Interview with Natalia Pinchuk



On 25 September Ales Bialiatski celebrates his 51st birthday, for the third time he will spend it in Bobruisk penal colony. The president of the Human Rights Centre Viasna, was sentenced to 4.5 years in prison for allegedly hiding in foreign accounts, considerable sums of money. Ales Bialiatski pleaded not guilty, and said that all the collected funds were used to help political prisoners. The international community has recognized Ales Bialiatski to be a prisoner of conscience. The wife of the political prisoner, Natalia Pinchuk gave an exclusive interview to palitviazni.info.

Natalia Pinchuk: *I do not have new information from Ales. I receive letters from him. But he does not write what is actually happening with him. Instead, he writes that everything is business as usual. He continues to work in the sewing room, packs some materials. And besides, all the same. As for the birthday, this is already his third birthday behind bars. Last year he celebrated the jubilee – 50 years. Today he turns 51. As for the celebration, it is out of the question. But, I have sent him wishes. I hope the birthday card will come on time, and that it will go through censorship.*

- In Warsaw, in the city center, on one of the bridges, unknown artist created a gallery of portraits of political prisoners from different countries, encouraging to write letters to them. Among others, there is a portrait of Ales Bialiatski. What kind of expressions of solidarity receives Ales Bialiatski?

Natalia Pinchuk: *I think this is one of the most moving forms of showing solidarity – solidarity shown by the "ordinary people", not the one expressed at the level of institutions or human rights organizations – though of course they also deserve a big thank you. Significant is the fact that people are aware of the situation in Belarus, they know what's going on with Ales and thus express their support. And this portrait itself is very moving. I think that when Ales finds out about it, he will be very happy.*

- Ales Bialacki was nominated for Václav Havel Award for Human Rights. Is it possible that Ales will receive this award?

Natalia Pinchuk: *I am happy because of the nomination, as it's another example of solidarity with Ales. The award ceremony will be held on 30 September. For now, I do not know the details. But it is important, that many people and organizations are interested in the situation in Belarus.*

-International public opinion is shaken by the news of Mykola Autukhovich's self-mutilation. What do you think, how much information about what is really happening in prisons reaches public opinion?

Natalia Pinchuk: *It's true that not much is getting out. However, such incidents and extreme behaviours, only prove how serious and intolerable situation is on the other side of the bars. This should be a signal for us that the solidarity with prisoners should be even greater.*

- Today the organization of mass actions in Belarus is practically impossible, but what about expressions of solidarity among individual citizens? Does Ales receive many letters?

Natalia Pinchuk: *Ales receives a lot of letters. He is not able to respond to all. Although, he tries as he can to write back to everyone. Moreover, Ales must work in prison. He works 6 days a week, therefore he is not able to answer to so many letters as quickly as he would like. However, I can unequivocally confirm that all acts of solidarity are very important to Ales. They help him to survive in the situation in which he has found himself.*

Judge lifts all restrictions on Poczobut's freedom



The judge granted complete freedom to Mr. Poczobut in connection with the expiration of his suspended three-year prison sentence. He could have been sent to a correctional institution or had the suspension of his prison term prolonged.

As Mr. **Poczobut** told BelaPAN, he does not view the ruling as evidence that Belarusian courts were fair. "If our legal system is fair, I should have been exonerated because I haven't committed any crime," he said. "The authorities simply didn't see any need to put me behind bars."

Mr. Poczobut said that he had not changed anything in his work because of the threat of imprisonment. "When I write, my top priority is to describe the Belarusian reality as accurately as possible and not to please the KGB or Lukashenka," he said.

In July 2013, district judges in Minsk lifted all restrictions on the freedom of former presidential candidate Uladzimir Nyaklyayew and journalist Iryna Khalip in connection with the expiration of suspended two-year prison sentences imposed on them over the December 19, 2010 post-election street protest.

In 2011, Mr. Poczobut, a Hrodna-based correspondent of the Polish newspaper Gazeta Wyborcza and an ethnic Pole, spent three months in jail and was eventually sentenced to a suspended three-year prison term with two years' probation on July 5 for allegedly insulting and defaming Mr. Lukashenka in his articles. On September 20, the Hrodna Regional Court upheld the sentence.

As Mr. Poczobut told reporters, defamation was largely found in the fact that he had called Mr. Lukashenka a dictator.